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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 003620

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM JO

SUBJECT: KING PARDONS TOUJAN FAISAL: EFFECT ON HER  
POLITICAL FUTURE UNCLEAR

REF: A. AMMAN 2559

1B. 3249

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM. REASONS: 1.5 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. King Abdullah issued a pardon June 26 which released Toujan Faisal from detention and vacated the State Security Court's decision to sentence her to one and one half years in prison (reftels). Faisal, who had been hospitalized due to deteriorating health, was detained for 100 days. According to media reports, she is currently convalescing at home. Whether she will be able to run for parliament or hold other offices in light of this pardon is unclear. END  
SUMMARY.

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FAISAL PARDONED FROM SENTENCE, STILL GUILTY OF SEDITION  
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¶2. (C) Toujan Faisal was released from the King Hussein Medical Center June 27 after being issued an official pardon by the King. Her health is not good, but she is expected to recover fully from her hunger strike as well as from breast cancer (as reported by local media). The King has been under pressure to pardon the former MP from within the GOJ as well as from Jordanian human rights activists and the local Circassian community. Reportedly, PM Abul Ragheb, after meeting with Circassian community leaders, sent a letter to the King requesting her release. (Note: the PM is widely believed to have been the main driving force behind Faisal's arrest/imprisonment - reftels). Long-time Embassy contact and human rights activist Fawzi Samhoury (protect) explained that the pardon is from punishment only, and that Faisal is still convicted, by the State Security Court, of the crime of sedition against the GOJ. The limit of the pardon was confirmed by a senior GOJ official. The conviction presents a barrier if Faisal attempts either to run for parliament or to hold another office; Samhoury explained that Jordanian law prohibits people guilty of 'non-political' crimes from seeking office. Note: 'non-political crime' is a term not defined by statute or legislation, and if Faisal does seek public office she may argue that her conviction was of a 'political' crime' in an effort to obviate this barrier.

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COMMENT  
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¶3. (C) The pardon of Faisal is a politically savvy move by the King. Many Jordanians were hoping for the pardon, believing that the former MP, although argumentative and offensive to many, was the victim of a political vendetta. Where Faisal goes from here is uncertain, but assuming that her health recovers, it will be interesting to see what the effect of her recent experience in the State Security Court will have on her outspoken character. If there is an avenue through which Faisal can run for office legally, she may resurface in the Jordanian political scene.  
Gnehm